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LAMPOONS

By the Same Author

VERSE

LONDON SONNETS
SHYLOCK REASONS WITH MR CHESTERTON
KENSINGTON GARDENS
THE UNKNOWN GODDESS

PROSE

CIRCULAR SAWS

LAMPOONS

BY

HUMBERT WOLFE

DRAWINGS BY

BOHUN LYNCH

LONDON

ERNEST BENN LTD.

1927

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PREFACE

THE age in which we live has not even the merit of being an iron age. It is the age of lath painted to look like iron. It is an age in which even vice is simulated, and where virtue is practised for the sake of a new sensation. It is an age in which we are sentimental about the dead, and respect their memories by forgetting the quick. It is an age when we do not persecute poetry, religion, and beauty, because, though we should be glad to do so, we are unable to detect them when they appear. It is an age where nothing succeeds like spiritual failure, and where the best seller and the worst buyer are the intellectual masters of the world. It is an age, above all, where we apologise for the emotions that we do not ourselves experience by adopting those that we imagine (wrongly) other people to have endured. In our loves we all wear our hearts on somebody else's sleeve. In our hatreds—but we have no hatred. We are all such good fellows at heart, even the richest of us.

I daresay that in all these respects the age resembles all its predecessors. I don't know. I have only lived in this one. I am content to leave the dead to bury their dead. I reserve my indignation and hate

for what can at least be abused, if it cannot be altered. And it is one of the most significant features of a time when it is supremely the case that "*difficile est saturam non scribere,*" that nobody writes satire of the plain, old-fashioned type, which raged with Juvenal, Rabelais, Pope, and Swift. We have, it is true, Bernard Shaw, Chesterton, and trundling after them, at a long interval, Hilaire Belloc. But Bernard Shaw's satire, terrible, relentless, and final as it is, lays an axe at the root of the world. He will hew down the crooked old tree, Ygdrasil, and plant a clean young fir in its place. For that very reason his is a struggle of the high gods, and the bolts in that huge contest are as high above us, if as dazzling, as the lightning. Shaw is a figure in the Twilight of the Gods, and he is the one thing between Valhalla and the grim beasts crawling to its destruction. He is, therefore, not so much a new satirist as a new religion.

Chesterton and Belloc, on the other hand, do definitely (and most satisfactorily) hate what comes under their observation. But their observation is limited (in this regard) to Jews, and politicians who, if they are not Jews, very well might be. Though I may perhaps be excused from sharing their opinions in this matter, I can, as one who feels that an ounce of clean hatred is worth a ton of impertinent indulgence, rejoice in such stuff as:

> "We also know the sacred height
> Upon Tugela side,
> Where those three hundred fought with Beit,
> And fair young Wernher died.

" The daybreak on the failing force,
the final sabres drawn:
Tall Goltman, silent on his horse,
superb against the dawn."

Or in—

" Two straight lines
Can't enclose a space,
But they can enclose a Corner to support the Chosen Race."

But the fact remains that the world is not wholly inhabited by Jews and politicians, and that it might be more profitable if these writers would hit a man of their own size (if, indeed, one could be discovered !). I mean by this that it has generally been found much easier to hate a Jew and a politician than anybody else. To pummel the Jew, who, by reason of his historical position, has always one hand tied behind his back, even if the other is in your pocket, is a queer way of exhibiting your strength, and as for the politician, you might as well hammer a figure of speech, or, rather, that is exactly what you are hammering. There await attack, smug, easy, and unmolested, a thousand things infinitely less vulnerable, and far more in need of being hit and hurt. Why will no one attack them, and attack them in the most effective medium of all-verse ?

There are no doubt several answers, but I content myself with the first—that nobody would publish such attacks. It may, perhaps, be objected that I must not let myself be guided only by the fate of my own satires. It is possible, a critic might exclaim, that if there were offered to a publisher satires that had some other merit than the author's unfounded pretensions, the result would be different. That

may be so, but if it is, where are the satires? I mention this by way of excuse for the penny-crackers that follow in this book. Don't misunderstand me. I am not apologising for the lack of taste and manners, of which they will, no doubt, be accused. No! I am apologising, because I am permitted to let off squibs in the gutter when I want to be pounding away with heavy artillery. Still, I am grateful even to have been permitted the tiny freedom of the lampoon, and perhaps it is a better freedom than that of the City of Brumchester offered to a cinema star. Nor do I regret that, with a few exceptions, the persons that I have selected to lampoon are the best of their time and their generation. *Optimi corruptio pessima*, and if genius is not to be scolded for being untrue to itself, how can we possibly attack those who err because they never had any lamps to guide them?

But, after all, it's no good being solemn about these pin-pricks. You can read the whole lot in ten minutes, and forget them in two. Mr. Kipling and Mr. Bennett will almost certainly never know that they have been written. For they are, as I say, penny-crackers, and it is therefore almost a waste of time to defend them, as though they were a serious contribution to satire. But, as I still hope some day to be permitted to attempt that contribution I will observe, if their taste is criticised, that I cannot imagine why caricatures in line should have conceded to them the use of every form of music-hall vulgarity of draughtsmanship, if lampoons are not to be accorded a tithe of that liberty. Every day we see drawings of prominent statesmen attired as

ballerinas, infants in arms, and even farmyard animals. Nobody objects, and we are even led to suppose that the victims are in the habit of proudly exhibiting these objects to their intimates. Personally, I confess that it does not amuse me to see a Prime Minister displayed as an old-clothes man, and to see Great Britain generally depicted as a pork butcher in a good way of business. But it seems that I am almost alone in this attitude. I am, therefore, no doubt wrong; but I am at least entitled to ask that the public attitude to caricatures should be borne in mind in considering lampoons. It is, of course, possible that as compared, say, with the drawings of "Poy" my lampoons lack a certain element of spiritual breadth. Their inferiority in this respect may be justly censured; but even if they cannot engage as professionals in this intellectual football, there may be a place for diffident amateurs whose eyes are not on the Gate. Anyhow, here they are.

HUMBERT WOLFE.

LONDON,
September, 1925.

About a dozen of these lampoons have appeared in "The Spectator." Permission to republish is gratefully acknowledged.

PROLEGOMENA TO ANY FUTURE SATIRE

" MILTON ! thou shouldst be living at this hour,"
but since your voice is still, and no one knows
whether life wears an artificial flower,
or the deep velvet of a breathing rose,
since no one cares whether the sudden shower,
that sweeps the world, is from a garden-hose,
or is the ancient, unexhausted power
of rain that cleans, and sanctifies, and goes,
let me, as when by innocent sacrilege
in some carved temple, whose hushed worshippers
seek truth, through Buddha's lips a wandered midge
shrills and is quiet, so let me rehearse
as shrill and brief, but no less dedicate:
" They also serve, who only stand and hate."

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. The First Man	17
The Taungs Man	19
II. Novelists	21
H. G. Wells	23
John Galsworthy	25
Rudyard Kipling	27
George Moore	29
Arnold Bennett	31
Hugh Walpole and Compton Mackenzie	33
D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce	35
Gilbert Frankau, Ethel Dell, A. S. M. Hutchinson	37
Aldous Huxley	39
III. Playwrights	41
G. B. Shaw	43
John Drinkwater	45
Sir James Barrie	47
IV. Critics	49
Robert Lynd and J. C. Squire	51
A. B. Walkley	53

PAGE

V. Beautiful Letters . . . 55

G. K. Chesterton . . . 57
Max Beerbohm . . . 59
Dean Inge 61
Lytton Strachey . . . 63
Bloomsbury and Maynard Keynes . 65
André Maurois . . . 67
H. Belloc 69

VI. The Literary Press . . . 71

"The London Mercury" . . 73
"The Times" Literary Supplement 75
"Punch" 77

VII. The Poets 79

(*a*) By Each Other—and Themselves 81

A. E. Housman and a Few Friends . . . 83
De la Mare, by John Masefield 85
John Masefield, by de la Mare 87
W. B. Yeats, by W. H. Davies 89
W. H. Davies, by W. B. Yeats 91
The Georgian Poets on E. M. 93

(*b*) By H. W. . . . 95

G. K. Chesterton . . 97
A. E. Housman . . 99
John Masefield . . 101
Hodgson, Yeats and de la Mare . . . 103

VIII. The Last Man . . . 105

Humbert Wolfe . . . 107
Epilogue (Apology to Euterpe) . 109

I

THE FIRST MAN

THE TAUNGS MAN

(*Australopithicus Africanus*)

HERE lies a man, who was an ape.
Nature, grown weary of his shape,
conceived, and carried out the plan
by which the ape is now the man.

II

NOVELISTS

H. G. WELLS

After having given birth
to a new heaven and a new earth,
thinking out new sorts of Hells,
here lies Mr. H. G. Wells.

JOHN GALSWORTHY

Ash to ash, to earth the earthy,
was not spoken of Galsworthy.
Like his books the soul of John
goes marching on, and on, and on.

RUDYARD KIPLING

THE tin-can politics of Rudyard
rust in some Tooting brick and mud yard;
while, through the sacred brushwood
rippling,
glimmers the faun the gods call Kipling.

GEORGE MOORE

Women he praised and, after women, Art.
Good friends he had, and used them all for copy.
Had but his genius matched as great a heart,
Time had not mixed his laurels with the poppy.

ARNOLD BENNETT

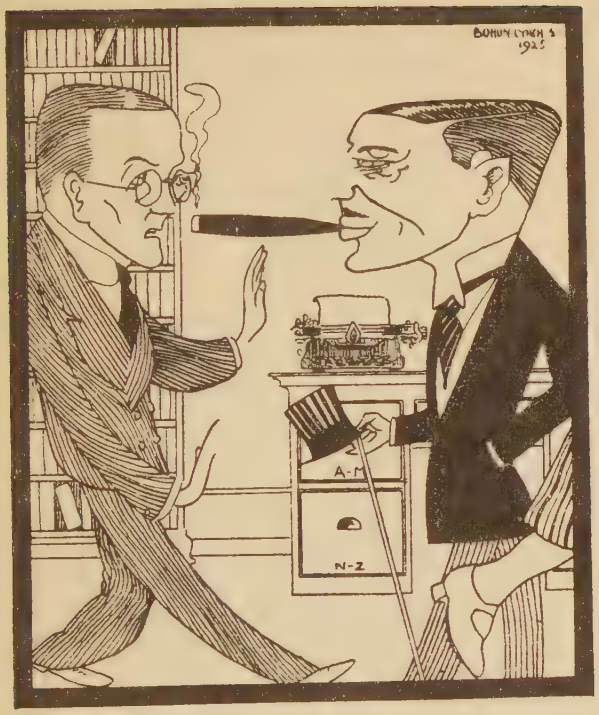
" ART is long, life short," save when it
is applied to Arnold Bennett,
whose Art was aimed (unless we wrong her)
to prove that life's a d——d sight longer.

HUGH WALPOLE AND COMPTON MACKENZIE

AUTHOR, who this turf may trample,
seek to follow their example,
and to standardize your frenzy,
like Hugh Walpole and Mackenzie.

D. H. LAWRENCE AND JAMES JOYCE

LAWRENCE here for ever blames
Joyce's reticence, while James
goes on stating his abhorrence
of the prudery of Lawrence.



GILBERT FRANKAU
ETHEL DELL
A. S. M. HUTCHINSON

GILBERT FRANKAU, Ethel Dell,
and Hutchinson lie here in—well,
no one knows, but each one hums:
" This is where winter never comes."

ALDOUS HUXLEY

HERE lies Huxley, who was given
genius enough to rule in heaven,
but, finding life intolerable,
chose instead to serve in Hell.

III

PLAYWRIGHTS

BERNARD SHAW

HERE lies Shaw, who made a jest
of life and truth—and mankind, lest
they'd see that he was leading them
steadily to Jerusalem.

JOHN DRINKWATER

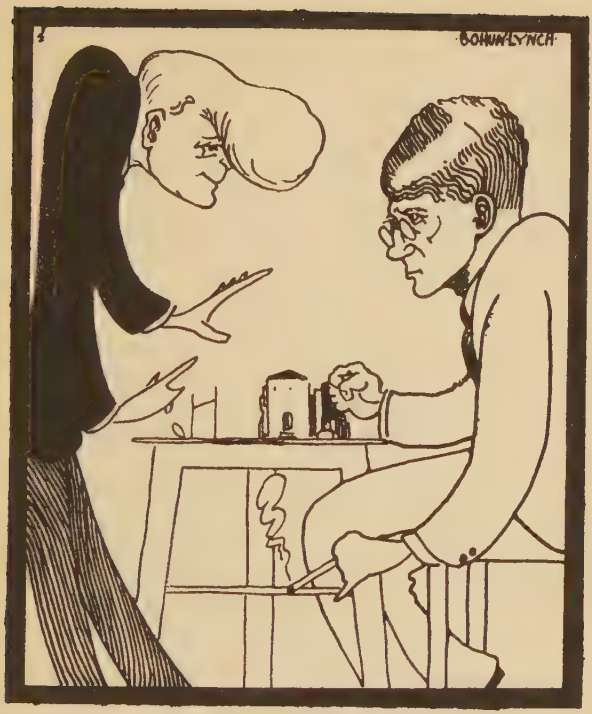
The lines upon this tombstone were:
" Hinc resurget Drinkwater ";
but someone went, and added to it:
" He wouldn't, not if Lincoln knew it."

SIR JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE, BART., O.M., LL.D., M.A.

By the road that travels on
further far than Kensington,
the other children need not tarry
any longer. Here is Barrie.

IV

CRITICS



ROBERT LYND AND J. C. SQUIRE

WHILE Lynd assails with gentle wit
the anthem, but has hopes of it,
his fellow critic J. C. Squire
has been, and taken on the choir!

A. B. WALKLEY

STRANGER, when resting on this bench,
murmur a few kind words in French,
or even Greek, if that don't trouble you,
for our most English A. B. W.

V

BEAUTIFUL LETTERS

G. K. CHESTERTON

HERE lies Mr. Chesterton,
who to heaven might have gone,
but didn't, when he heard the news
that the place was run by Jews.

MAX BEERBOHM

WITH his special genius Max
singles out for his attacks
those in the Angelic Host,
who reward attention most.

DEAN INGE

HARK ! the herald angels sing
timidly, because Dean Inge
has arrived, and seems to be
bored with immortality.

LYTTON STRACHEY

HERE lies Lytton Strachey planning
epigrams to silence Manning,
while the latter rests *in pace,*
never having heard of Strachey.

BLOOMSBURY AND MAYNARD KEYNES

CONFIDENT that art and brains
end with them (and Maynard Keynes)
the school of Bloomsbury lies here,
greeting the unseen with a sneer.

ANDRÉ MAUROIS

André Maurois thought it well
to mock at you as Ariel.
Yet pardon, Shelley, if you can
the jealousy of Caliban!

HILAIRE BELLOC

HERE lies Hilaire Belloc, who
preferred the devil to a Jew.
Now he has his chance to choose
between the devil and the Jews.

VI

THE LITERARY PRESS

"THE LONDON MERCURY"

WEEP for *The London Mercury*, the clinical
gauge for the frankly mercenary cynical.
The early Arlen didn't make it stir:
the later shattered the thermometer.

"THE TIMES" LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

HEARING that the recording Archangel
doubted what authors he should send to
Hell,
The Times cut out, and generously sent
the last few pages of its Supplement.

"PUNCH"

E. V. L. and E. V. K.
with A. P. H. have slipped away,
to the end pursued, we guess,
by wit's expiring "S.O.S."

VII

THE POETS

(*a*) By Each Other—and Themselves.
(*b*) By H. W.

THE POETS

(*a*) By Each Other—and Themselves.

A. E. HOUSMAN AND A FEW FRIENDS

When lads have done with labour
in Shropshire, one will cry,
" Let's go and kill a neighbour,"
and t'other answers " Aye !"

So this one kills his cousins,
and that one kills his dad;
and, as they hang by dozens
at Ludlow, lad by lad,

each of them one-and-twenty,
all of them murderers,
the hangman mutters: " Plenty
even for Housman's verse."

WALTER DE LA MARE

By J. M.

He heard the hounds in heaven baying,
and beauty's voice that does not falter,
clear as a mountain-torrent spraying
the marbles of a mountain-altar.
He heard, and turned away, preferring
to naked truth the things that seem,
and walked with fingers scarcely stirring
the muffled roses of his dream.
And beauty, forsaken, but prevailing,
beauty as difficult as death,
whistled her hounds, and set them trailing
a wilder scent than roses' breath.
He watched the hounds go sweeping by him,
and, fleeting into dark, deny him.

JOHN MASEFIELD

By W. de la M.

Here lies a most vigorous poet,
Hard of fist and thought was he.
I think he was the most vigorous poet
that ever assaulted poetry.

But still they read him, still they praise him,
however rude, rude he be,
which makes me wonder, when I crumble,
will anyone remember me?

W. B. YEATS

By W. H. Davies

Yeats sees, by twos, his swans at Coole,
with backward-folded necks,
on Lethe write their beautiful
and everlasting X.

Not so my swans. There is a pair
floating before me now;
I'll take them by their beaks, I swear,
and push them like a plough.

W. H. DAVIES

By W. B. Yeats

There will be no more crying of sparrows.
They will not quarrel nor cry any longer.
For, like a tumbled bunch of feathers,
the poet Davies, who understood the sparrows,
lies between two tall grasses.
I wish that the sparrows were not quiet.

THE GEORGIAN POETS ON E. M.

THE origin of Georgian verse,
since his modesty prefers
anonymity, is thus
immortally anonymous.

THE POETS

(*b*) By H. W.

G. K. CHESTERTON

THROUGH him, who loved the meanest thing,
with wonder touched the least,
this blade of grass becomes a king,
and all the dust a priest.

A. E. HOUSMAN

Tell me not here, it needs not saying,
that, quitting his Elysium,
each spring to watch the cherry snowing,
and the green fires of the plum,
lest later lads should miss their message,
singing, the Shropshire lad will come.

JOHN MASEFIELD

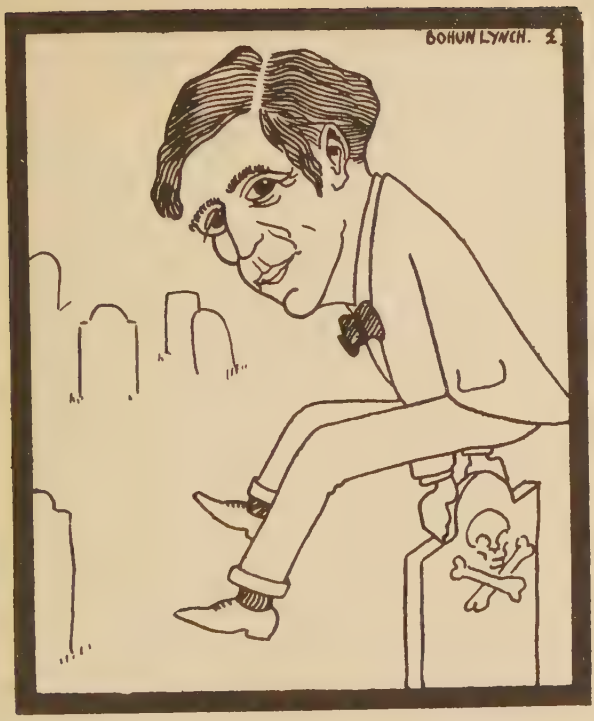
WHAT needs my Masefield for his honoured bones?
Let others have their brass, or lettered stones.
Enough for us to know that, where he's gone,
Song's everlasting mercy goes with John.

HODGSON, YEATS AND DE LA MARE

HERE with Keats and Brooke and Shelley,
waiting for the last reveille,
lie, immortal, cool and fair
Hodgson, Yeats, and de la Mare.

VIII

THE LAST MAN



HUMBERT WOLFE

OTHER men have written worse
than the author of this verse,
but at least they had the wit
not to go, and publish it.

EPILOGUE

Apology to Euterpe

Nay ! do not scold, Euterpe ! If I stray
it is not far, and but a little while,
and only then as might a schoolboy play
half-grave, and half with a defensive smile.
Soon, soon the truant will return the way
where autumn's gold and scarlet notes beguile
the quiet leaves, or turn them into spray
above St. Cergue mile after coloured mile;
or where against the stars the dusky Dôle
breathes all night long between his scented trees,
and casts his midnight spell upon the soul
of green and aromatic silences.
There I shall seek, and, if I lose you, still
beyond these peaks by Tempe is a hill.

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